# Table of Contents:

Acknowledgments ..... 11
Note on the Text ..... 15

**Introduction** ..... 17

1. **Conceptual Framework: Eddas and Identities** ..... 29
   1.1 Theorising Mythology ..... 29
   1.2 Theorising National Identity ..... 45
      1.2.1 General Perspectives ..... 45
      1.2.2 Icelandic Perspectives ..... 60
   1.3 Romanticism and National Mythology ..... 69

2. **Introducing Iceland's 'Pagan' Heritage** ..... 79
   2.1 How Primary are the Primary Sources? ..... 79
      2.1.1 An Icelandic Sonderweg? ..... 80
      2.1.2 Skaldic and Eddic Poetry ..... 83
      2.1.3 Snorri Sturluson: Building a Norse Olympus ..... 87
      2.1.4 Other Medieval Sources ..... 93
   2.2 Late and Post-Medieval Edda-Receptions ..... 97
      2.2.1 Icelandic Continuity? ..... 97
      2.2.2 The Beginnings of an International Career ..... 104
      2.2.3 The Grimmian Moment ..... 113

3. **Back to the 'Ocean of Poetry': Nordic Romanticism (1800-1847)** ..... 125
   3.1 Determining a Point of Departure ..... 125
   3.2 The Island in the City: Copenhagen ..... 127
      3.2.1 Denmark around 1800 ..... 127
      3.2.2 Danish Romanticism ..... 130
      3.2.3 N.F.S. Grundtvig ..... 132
      3.2.4 Pan-Scandinavian and Nordic Tendencies ..... 135
   3.3 Icelandic Culture in Denmark ..... 138
      3.3.1 Linguistic Activism and Literary Societies ..... 138
      3.3.2 The Experience of Otherness ..... 145

3.4 The Tainted Heritage of Finnur Magnússon ..... 146
3.4.1 'Romantic to the Core' ..... 146
3.4.2 Finnur's International Network ..... 148
3.4.3 A Benchmark for National Authenticity: The *Poetic Edda* ..... 150
3.4.4 Indo-European Origins ..... 153
3.4.5 Natural Mythology ..... 158
3.4.6 Finnur as Icelander ..... 162

4. **National Romanticism and the New Society (1820-1845)** ..... 167
4.1 Bjarni Thorarensen and Freyja's Cats ..... 167
4.1.1 The Birth of the Lady of the Mountain ..... 167
4.1.2 Eddic Necrophilia ..... 172
4.2 The Men of *Fjölnir* ..... 173
4.2.1 From Volksgeist to þjóðarandi ..... 173
4.2.2 Retribution for the Rhapsodists: Jónas Hallgrímsson ..... 177
4.2.3 The Icelandic Mythscape ..... 186
4.2.4 'Ravens on Hummocks': the Alþingi Restored ..... 189

5. **The Gods of the People: Folklore and Visual Representations (1840-1870)** ..... 197
5.1 The Grimmian Project ..... 197
5.1.1 A View from Mount Hekla ..... 197
5.1.2 Jón Árnason and the Folkloristic Turn ..... 200
5.2 Painting the Gods: Sigurður málari and the Nation ..... 206
5.2.1 Material Culture and the Fine Arts ..... 206
5.2.2 The Gods on Stage ..... 210
5.2.3 Modern Valkyries ..... 213

6. **Eddic Poetry, Eddic Politics (1840-1900)** ..... 217
6.1 'Quran of the Scandinavians': Grímur Thomsen and the Pan-Scandinavian Ideal ..... 217
6.1.1 New Manifestations of Romanticism ..... 217
6.1.2 The Aesthetics of Nordic Culture ..... 219
6.1.3 Cultural Politics ..... 226
6.1.4 Paganism as a Historical Factor: Hákon Jarl ..... 230
6.1.5 The New Ginnungagap ..... 234
6.2 'Raise Mjölnir!': Gísli Brynjúlfsson's Revolution ..... 238
6.2.1 Journalism and Mythology ..... 238
6.2.2 Þórr and Attila ..... 242

6.2.3 An Icelandic Revolution? 245
6.3 'Still Iðunn is not dead': Benedikt Gröndal 247
6.3.1 Eccentric and Idealist 247
6.3.2 Reclaiming the Eddas 250
6.3.3 Hellas and Hyperborea 257
6.3.4 Freyja's Tears 260
6.3.5 A New Asgard 266

7. **Myth and National Culture in the Academy (1880-1918)** 271
7.1 Origin and Ownership: The Contested Origins of the Edda 271
7.1.1 Nourishing the Tree of Nationality 271
7.1.2 From Edda to Rímur: Finnur Jónsson 277
7.1.3 Locating the Creative Moment: Björn M. Ólsen 282
7.1.4 Between Hekla and Dofrafjall 291
7.2 Historiography: Ásatrú and the Nation 299
7.2.1 Reconsidering Pagan Iceland 299
7.2.2 New Pagan Topographies 302
7.2.3 Jón J. Aðils and the Golden Age 306
7.2.4 Views on Iceland's Conversion 320

8. **Metaphysical Approaches (1860-1918)** 331
8.1 Poetry and Psychologisation: From Romanticism to Symbolism 331
8.1.1 Noble Heathens 331
8.1.2 'Is that Mímir by his Well?': Matthías Jochumsson 333
8.1.3 A Christ before Christ: Steingrímur Thorsteinsson 344
8.2 The Gods in Sculpture: Einar Jónsson and his Mythological Universe 348
8.2.1 A New Mythological Language 348
8.2.2 The Quest of Gangleri: Ásatrú and Theosophy 351
8.2.3 The Past in Public Spaces: Heathen Heroes 358
8.2.4 The Gods in Sculpture 363

9. **New Mythscapes (1880-1918)** 367
9.1 Eddic Themes in Everyday Life 367
9.1.1 Romanticism and Banality 367
9.1.2 Eddic First Names 368
9.1.3 Between Mjölnir and the Cross 370
9.2 Downtown Asgard: Mythology in the Urban Space 372

9.3 Beyond Ragnarök: New Iceland ..... 378
9.3.1 Confronting the Unknown ..... 378
9.3.2 Stephan G. Stephansson: Poet without Fatherland ..... 381
9.3.3 Establishing Gimli ..... 383
9.3.4 Halldór Briem and *Framfari* ..... 387

10. **Epilogue: Gods and Men in Modern Iceland** ..... 391
10.1 Philology and Politics After 1918 ..... 391
10.2 Contemporary Art and Literature ..... 395
10.3 Names and Language ..... 398
10.4 Ásatrú as a Living Faith ..... 400
10.5 The Impact of Tourism ..... 404

**Concluding Remarks: New Beginnings** ..... 411

Images ..... 435
Bibliography ..... 450
*Terug naar Asgaard*: Samenvatting in het Nederlands ..... 483